The Bible and its Readers.

EVA SCHEELINE.

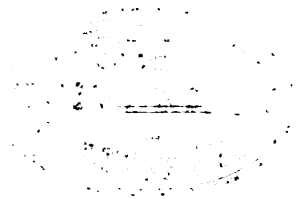
The Bible

AND ITS READERS

—BY—

EVA SCHEELINE.

"Go, little bark. I send thee out
Upon the Future's heaving sea,
And watch thee on thy trembling route—
For thou art all in all to me."



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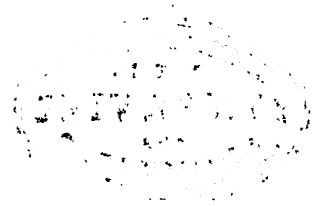
TO THE

NATIVE DAUGHTERS OF CALIFORNIA

FROM

A NATIVE DAUGHTER.



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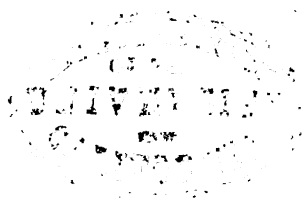
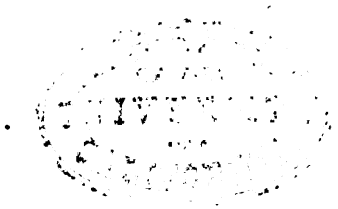




PREFACE.

It is probable the impression that the Bible teaches contradictions, is wider and deeper than the facts warrant. If so, preachers themselves, and scientists, are largely to blame. Preachers too often think they infallibly know the teachings of the Bible, while scientists too often think they infallibly know the teachings of the Bible and of science also. These are large subjects, and it may not be deemed harsh for me to intimate that there is room for mistake in these matters. Of course, every thinking person will admit that he entertains some erroneous belief. No really sane man believes he is infallible. While, as a matter of fact, every one holds

some erroneous belief, no honest man holds one conscientiously. To a man the whole body of his beliefs is true. He, therefore, believes some error to be true. It is required of every man, therefore, that he be open to conviction.

We read into the Bible, or between the lines, meanings found by scientists of later days. So of metaphysical systems, Philo found Plato in Moses, and the "Christian Fathers" found the warfare of souls in the tramps of Israel in the wilderness, as well as in the battles. So the geological theory is taught by Moses. So the evolution theory is countenanced, at least, in the Bible. It would be taught outright if the theory of evolution were established as a fact.

I believe that it is chiefly because claims are made for the Bible which it does not make itself, that so much indifference prevails regarding its contents.

By the word Bible, I designate the Old

and New Testaments in their original tongues.

I ask my readers to approach the study of my theme, if not free from bias, at least willing to investigate impartially, and to accept that which is manifestly true.

Truth asks only a dispassionate hearing, and scorns to be wooed and won by him who grants it less.

With the sole purpose of contributing something to the steady advance of truth, I am,

Respectfully and sincerely,

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTORY.

When the forefathers of some modern critics of Moses were naked savages, contesting with fist, club, stone, noose, and spear, with wild beasts, for the mastery, the children of Israel had overthrown dynasties, subjugated kingdoms, built cities, and pervaded the earth with the idea of the sacredness of home, and the oneness of God. When he was writing of the Creator, and man, the son of God, made in his image, and prophesying the dominion of man over all mundane things, they had scarcely enough force in their spines to stand erect, to gaze with dumb wonder into the heavens.

That God did not, directly or indirectly, make revelations of himself, his world, and

man, before the time of Moses, there is no evidence to prove, either in the Bible or out of it. Speech and writing existed centuries before the time of Moses*; man was as dear to the heart of the Father before Moses was born, as since; man was as ignorant, as needy, as sinful, as helpless, as undone, then as since then, and God changes not! It is unequivocally declared that God "spake by the mouth of his holy prophets," who have *been* since the world began. Luther says "many things were written and described ere Moses was born."

But let us suppose that Moses, sick at soul of the lizard and calf gods of Egypt, made up his mind that he would write of God and creation; or, let us suppose that he, inspired by the thought of God and

* The 78th Psalm shows that history came down in tradition—"our fathers have told us." *Lost books of the Bible; also, Book of Wars (Num. 21: 14), Book of Jasher in Joshua, 10: 13.*

The Book of Annals is mentioned more than thirty times in the Book of Kings.

good, so wrote; in either case, the *meaning* of what he wrote remains the same.

Suppose a multitude of people who are slaves in Egypt. Let that condition exist for a few centuries. Suppose, now, that they shall leave Egypt. Their labor had been profitable to their owners. They were not released on economic grounds, but their presence in Egypt had become injurious, even blighting, to the dominant race. That is the result of slavery. It was not, however, until the blight reached the upper classes, that they were let go by their masters. After releasing the slaves, the Prince of Egypt changed his mind, and pursued them. Suppose an unarmed multitude of men, women, and children, hotly pursued by an army on horseback. They are hemmed in on all sides. Are you ready now, in thought, to witness a wholesale butchery? God forbid. The sea before them *must* open to let them escape. It matters not whether they arrived at the

precise moment when the waters ebbed by the law of nature, that is, by God acting through nature, or whether He caused a wind to divide the sea. The fact is, they did escape. If these helpless, hapless, and innocent victims had been put to the sword while in an honest effort to acquire peaceful liberty, that would have been a dark problem to explain, beside which the thought that God made the winds and the waves serve Him, is luminous.

Now, is the moral sense satisfied simply with the escape of the pursued? What of their selfish and lustful pursuers? Let them *drown;* that is as little as can appease man's sense of justice. If theologians have followed the drowned host farther than death, there is no warrant in the story for that.

Naturally, the people who left Egypt had a human leader. Name him Moses. A mixed multitude followed him. He leads them into a wilderness. He must

control his followers. His will must be supreme. He must have power to execute it, and also execute it unhesitatingly on occasions of need. He has no ordinary task. Did he control this people unaided? This people who certainly had not improved by the lash? This dissatisfied and somewhat sullen people? If Moses controlled them unaided, he stands on a dizzy pedestal far above the greatest leaders with whom history brings us into acquaintance.

Not only did Moses control this mixed multitude, but he evoked order out of anarchy, and established systematic training and discipline among them. Let us try to image the conditions, and see what was required.

There is a multitude living out doors, sleeping in tents. They needed a general chart of conduct. That chart needed authentication as supreme and inflexible. He gives the people "Ten Words;" he

claims he received them from God. These "Ten Words" rebuked idolatry, lying, lust, dishonesty, in stern and uncompromising tones. True, some of these "Ten Words" were known down in Egypt, but they were known as dictates of policy; known from a utilitarian standpoint.

Moses gives these, and others, unknown in Egypt, as alive with the utterance and power of God. He needed more than to be learned in all the learning of Egypt to put behind the "Ten Words" the awful majesty of the One Eternal. A priestly invention, this? All the priests in Egypt had not the capacity to make the invention. He was immeasurably the superior of the priests of Egypt before then—then, and even down to the present day. It is easier to believe that he made a just claim —that God did speak to his servant, Moses.

But it is in human nature to violate moral law, and commit crimes. Moses

was dealing with man, not only as an individual, but as a community. Every crime possible to man must be depicted, analyzed, defined, and their punishments allotted. This is not a pleasant duty, nor does it make pleasant reading. It results in the penal code of a people. If theologians have thought that the penal code of the Israelites was to be read in public, to men, women, and children, they thought wrongly; the thought is not in the code. If "infidels" have objected to the code being published at all, they have made an ignorant objection.

But it is better to prevent crime than to punish it; so this should receive consideration from Moses in his mighty problems in the wilderness. If a state of mind positive against crime could be brought about —if the Sinless One would aid man! So Moses sought to bring his people into service to God. He inculcated worship. People must have forms of worship. He gave

them forms. These forms are so given as to cultivate order, exactness, ideas of beauty, grandeur, holiness; and behind the form stood the Former; they were types of thought to impress in man true conceptions of God. Moses inculcated obedience to God, and love to the neighbor. That he wrought wisely is evident, for he laid an eternal moral basis under his people.

Yet, let him do his best, man does fall into folly. "Shall Gold hold out against man forever? Shall God not pity? Yea, he shall; but man must lay down his willful rebellion." To such "the Lord will proclaim himself as merciful, long suffering, plenteous in grace?" This idea was sought to be brought about by the ceremonies of atonement. In after years, through no fault of Moses, some Israelites thought that there was virtue in sacrifices in and of themselves. Isaiah rebuked this in stern tones. He set the sacrifices upon

their true Mosaic foundation, as being meant as the visible expressions of inward efforts at cleansing, and worthless without the latter. (Is. 1:10-18.)

The people in the wilderness must have a Civil Code also. Moses gave them a Civil Code. This code takes property as it was, recognizes the rights of property, and while slavery was an institution in the order of things, made it less grievous.

Nor did Moses pretend to be infallible in his methods of administrating the government. He was a teachable, humble man, as is manifest by the readiness with which he adopted an improvement suggested by his father-in-law, Jethro, priest of Midian. (Ex. 18:1, 13-26.)

But a people living out doors, in a wilderness, are peculiarly liable to sickness and contagion, arising from any neglect of cleanliness. There should be broad and comprehensive rules laid down for them, under the strongest possible authentica-

tion. Moses did so. Only the foolish think he ought not to have done this. Only silly people think they were given to be read from the pulpit, or in family worship.

During the stay in the wilderness, some object lessons in crime were enacted. Man is not seen at his best in these matters. But man, if he is to be known as he is, must be seen at his worst. That would not be a book of life, only a make-believe, which represented man in one phase alone. We insist that the ugly aspects of man are not meant for public exhibition. We insist that only in the *administration of law and justice*, or to *aid both*, should they be dragged into light. *They were told in this connection. They were the reports of criminal procedures.* He sins against man, who, for purposes of evil, exposes deformities of body or mind to the public.

Men in war are not seen to the best advantage. Even a good man cannot fight in the best of humor. He will do things

then that misrepresent the real man he is. When he misrepresents himself, if he says anything about God or man, he will misrepresent them.

If a people enter a strange land which is inhabited, the strangers ask questions, and begin aggressing. Those who enter must fight or quit the land. Should the Israelites go back to Egypt? The earth belongs to man, but not to one man, nor a race of men. If the new comers had to fight, what could put more nerve into them than to tell them that "the Lord is on their side?" Moses did right in so assuring his people. Events have shown he was right. The nations that opposed him *are not*, while Israel, though scattered, is yet helping to shape for good the destinies of man.

"As a man, man is the creature with whom I have to do, and the varieties of his character interest me more than all the possible varieties of mosses, shells, and fossils."—HANNAH MORE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BIBLE.

To whom written and to whom not written.

The Bible was not written to Atheists. It assumes the existence of God. It was not written for Deists. It assumes that God does communicate with man. It does not think a denial of this worth a moment's consideration.

It was not written for Agnostics. Zophar is claimed as one of this class. The Bible repudiates Zophar (Job. 42: 7-9). An unknown and absolutely unknowable God is practically the same as no God. Much less was the Bible written for those Agnostics who, while holding that the First Cause is *unknown* and *unknowable*, proceed

to tell us about him; how he brought man and the world to their present condition, and how he must govern them in the future, or forfeit their approval.

The Bible is written to Theists. In its opening sentence it assumes the existence of God as a matter of course, and the existence of a belief in God by man as fundamental. Nowhere does it recognize that a reasonable doubt of God's existence is possible, and where one is mentioned as denying that there is a God, he is denounced as a fool.

True to these necessary assumptions, the Bible, everywhere, assumes that man is a Theist. It is thus true to man's history upon the earth. Man could not be a polytheist without believing in God, any more than a man could believe in the multiplication table without believing in a unit. Man could not even be an idolator without believing in God, for an idol would have no meaning, unless it were taken to be a God, or to represent a God.

Upon these essential assumptions the Bible states that nature is alive with the idea of God; so nature is represented as declaring the glory of God, showing His handiwork, and manifesting His eternal power and God head. It does not say that these can be inferred from nature by a process of reasoning, but that they are direct and immediate communications from nature—God's nature to man, God's son. From the Bible standpoint, an argument to prove the existence of God is an unnecessary impertinence.

Think of a man arguing to prove that the sun shines! The sun proves itself by a direct appeal to man.

Hence, the Bible simply proceeds to make God more fully known to man, and this involves the idea that man can test revelation. According to the Bible, man is God's son. From this standpoint we should expect that more space and consideration would be given to man than to all other subjects, and that all other subjects

should be viewed principally as they are related to man. One line is devoted to making the stars. "He made the stars, also." Details are given in relation to making man. The earth is exalted as man's home, above the remainder of the universe. This is as it should be. Breathing space on the earth is worth more to man than all the "milky way." The sun, the moon, the stars, are bodies of light. It matters not whether they borrow light, or have it in their nature, they give it to man. They perform uses for him. They are much, besides, but they are mostly man's servants. If they had no relation to man, they would have no existence to him. The Bible is written in the assumption that man is the greatest being in this universe. The assumption is true in fact, and must be held true in theory, or man will lose himself in his insignificance* among the

* Ps., 8 : 3-4. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

rocks, inquiring their age, or among little bugs with long names, or among the fossils. Whether we will or not, man, to whom nothing exists which cannot manifest itself through his senses or faculties, is the central fact in the universe, and any revelation which should regard him otherwise would be false, and any science which should regard him otherwise is false. The earth, the heavens, the universe, from man's view, were made to serve him. The sun, the moon, and stars, shine for him, water flows, fire burns, the earth spins, gravity attracts, grass grows—all things are and do for him. They may do much, besides, and for many others, but they do these things for him as much as if he were the only being on the earth. The scientist seems to think that a ring around Saturn is of more importance than man. When he writes a book of man, he divides it somewhat as follows: First, nothing; secondly, protoplasm; thirdly, evolution; fourthly,

variations; fifthly, missing links—then, after dizzy ages have transpired, man, protoplasm plus, and finally dust, nought!

To man, man is the center and circumference of the universe, and a real book of man must recognize this inevitable fact. To man there is nothing *above* him but the One who is in him and of him, as cause and destiny; who can be conceived of as God, only as first conceived of through man. Let a man but really believe that he is a son of God, and systems of worlds are flecks of dirt compared to him. The whole universe waits on man. Man, being able to think and suffer, is of more importance to God than all the dirt, elements, or atoms aside from him, past, present, or future. The Bible was wise when it made man and his home paramount to all else, terrestrial and celestial. That ancient sage* who said that man was made for a

*Ps., 8:5. "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor."

little time lower than the angels, was not on his knees to ought except God. There is naught in the Heavens or in the Deeps that man can rationally prostrate himself before, except the Maker of Man. God did, God should, talk to man as to the son of the King Eternal.

"Is there in us mind and reason, and shall there be no mind elsewhere in the universe?"—SOCRATES.

CHAPTER II.

THE TIME DEMON. EVOLUTION.

What does time do? Nothing. What is time? Only a hollow somewhat in which things are done. We get down before this Time Demon and worship him. This appears even in our proverbs. Time cures all sorrows; time makes all things even. Empty nonsense! During time all sorrows may be cured by a curer; during time Justice may make things even.

So the scientist is down on his knees before the Time Demon. Grant him but a few cycles of time, and a tad-pole can become a man! If the tad-pole has not in him the essential elements of man, all eternity can not bring them out. Time is not a cause. Eternity is not a cause. Time is

only that in which causes operate. Time has no more power as cause than space has. The reliance of the evolutionist, however, is on time. Give him time enough. Great is time!

Science Objects.

We will make a brief survey of the objections which science interposes to revelation.

Priests of science believe in evolution. Evolution is a word they employ to embrace several conflicting theories of the beginnings of things. First, there is the evolution theory, which assumes an unknown and unknowable Cause for the present order of nature. This unknown and unknowable Cause is *known* to be unknown and unknowable! We have here a contradiction of terms. The rational gentlemen who hold this theory proceed to inform us, in detail, how this Cause began, and established the universe. They hold, therefore,

that they *know* his operations. Next, they tell us that the operation is based upon an "upward tendency," the lower forms becoming higher ones; the homogeneous, or simple, becoming heterogeneous, or complex; the like diversifying into the unlike. This process has taken incalculable ages to accomplish. According to their theory, the process should continue forever, until the homogeneous protoplasm—whatever that means—becomes one heterogeneous infinitude, or more.

Another theory is the same, except that it arrests evolution at the threshhold of man. Another is a combination of both theories, and one additional, in that it has no First Cause. In this theory, nothing, a few million years ago, began to evolve a world. If nothing did that well, now, that it has intelligence, power, etc., to co-operate with, it should end by making God, and then many Gods.

Another theory is to the effect that

things change, grow, develop; hence change, growth, development, instead of being results, are causes; and we, and that which is and shall come after us, are the effects of the causes; "causes which we see constantly in operation around us."

Grant that man exists; grant that that which testifies to the existence of man is not, in its root, a lie; that is, grant that you are not a delusion and a cheat, it follows:

1. That man is eternal--never began, and never will cease; or,

2. That before he was, he made himself; or,

3. That man was made by the First Cause.

The first proposition I will not attempt to explain. It is one theory of God. The second one is contradictory and impossible. The third one is left for rational minds. Excuse us because we accept the third proposition. Between man as eternal, both

as to past and future, and man as nothing creating himself, and as to man being made by the Eternal, we accept the last hypothesis.

Rolling away a Stone.

It is presumed that man is here! For all practical purposes, man can be fully studied without any reference to his origin. If it could be demonstrated that man began in protoplasm, he would require the same food, clothing, shelter, education, etc., that he does now. If chemists could make protoplasm and start it on its way to evolve a man, when the man arrived, after countless ages, or after twenty-four hours, he would be the same creature. He would be man. The laws by which man, as an individual, or as a community, must be governed in his relations to the universe, are just the same upon any theory of his origin, supposed or supposable. If we believe an utter absurdity, as that man, before he had any existence, said to himself "Be,"

and thus *became* man as he is, would still be the same for all purposes of science. Nay, even the question of what relation *he*, who *became*, sustains to *him* who said "Be," man, as a product to man, as a creator, would still remain.

It requires men having a peculiar gift to dispute, in hot terms, about the age of a skull, while indifferent to the moanings of pain all around them; to dispute whether a splinter from a rock is 50,000, or 50,000,000 years old, while undisturbed by the march of famine and pestilence. Peace! There are skulls with brains in them that demand attention. Peace! It is the same splinter, under any theory, or under none.

Let man and the earth be accepted as facts; it is not necessary to have a theory of creation in order to love man and serve him, nor to make the earth minister to his good. Whether man asks for bread for body or mind, it can be given without first stopping to roll away a stone from the tomb of the past.

Here is man with great needs, none of which can be supplied by studying him as protoplasm. The Bible presents man to us as man. The sight presents him the same. A glance at man's history shows man succeeding man, as far back as the Eternal. No one can see a break in the procession. This is not studying man with an hypothesis. The last look you can take is of a man in the form of man.

First and last, therefore, the Bible view of the physical man is that which attests itself to the universal history of man. It is not an hypothesis. It is demonstrable fact.

"No man liveth to himself."

A world of mere phenomena, all events bound together by an inflexible law of cause and effect, is a dead machine. The human *heart*, which must not be left out in the consideration of any subject affecting man, refuses to believe in a universe without purpose and will.

"It is as easy to close the eyes of the mind as those of the body."—BUTLER.

CHAPTER III.

THE AFTER-DINNER THEORY.

It is conceded and deplored by the Temple and the Church, that there is a growing disbelief in the Bible. A favorite explanation of the fact is that this is due to sin. To many people, sin, instead of itself needing explanation, explains all mysteries, even accounting for the pangs and death of all animals, as well as man.

There is no sin for which any man needs reject the Bible to commit, for there is no sin that is not committed by believers in the Bible. Another explanation is, that there is a conflict between science and the Bible. In a subsequent chapter this will be explained. In the meantime, suffice it to say that there is no conflict between the

real Bible and real science. The conflict is on false issues.

A third explanation is, that the Bible gives unworthy views of God, which offend the moral sense of man, and will offend it more and more as his moral sense developes.

The after-dinner theory of inspiration, that every sentence, word, syllable, and letter in the Bible, is the word of God, from His Throne, is largely responsible for the rejection of the whole Bible. That foolish theory maintains that one must accept the whole Bible as the Word of God, or reject it all. No sane man believes, or can believe, that all the Bible is inspired. There are falsehoods in the Bible, words of bad men, and even of good men in bad moods. Hence, the man who still believes is compelled to reject the after-dinner theory. Many people never make a revision of their belief, but steadily scorn the whole book. This theory of inspiration is the fertile parent of infidels, atheists, and agnostics.

A careful analysis of the arguments of "infidels" against the Bible will show that they are based on a high conception of the character of God. The thought of an eternal hell made Col. Ingersoll frantic; the same thought made Jonathan Edwards rejoice. (The mistake Mr. Ingersoll made, is in not appreciating the joy to the Edwards' minds, of which class there are many.) When any doctrine hurts a man, he will let go of it.

The fact that God can reveal himself to man at all, presupposes that man can understand the revelation, and is capable of recognizing libels against His character. Besides, the Bible *contains high revelations of His attributes,* which contradict the monstrosities to which we have referred.

Three Conceptions of God.

There are three general conceptions of God. There is the conception that he is an enlarged man, fighting for us when we are

his friends, and against us when we are his enemies. He seeks his will, and the only law he recognizes is to do what pleases him. He is very easily displeased. Those who accept this conception can readily believe that if a man is a friend of such a God, he may deceive man, cheat, lie, even murder, and say he was commanded by God to do so; he may do any crime in the universe, and say that God approves it, provided the crime be committed against an enemy of God. This is the God that tells a man to kill his son, and when the man has become the murderer of his son in intent, can change the fact, and prevent its outward expression. He catches a goat in a thicket as a substitute. But he must have blood—he loves the smell of blood. He sees the bleeding victim, and takes pleasure in its agony. He can take pleasure in the death pangs of doves and lambs. He is simply the *brutal and murderous instincts of man, written large, and lawless, and powerful.*

He is restrained only by lack of power. People having iron chariots are too strong for him. (Judges, 1:19.) That is, he dies when civilization sets in. He is still the God of the savage American Indian; of the Cherokees and Cherokee preachers. With refinement of cruelty bordering on the infinite, some conceive this God to have a torture hole for his enemies in the eternities.

Conceiving that this creature is the God revealed by the Bible, men of heart reject this Book. He is not the God of the Bible. Man, in his blackest and grossest moods, made this horror. When man is set on fire with lying, theft, lust, hate, and war, he cannot reveal God. Everything he says of God then is false, libelous, blasphemous.

2. There is the conception that God is a failure. He undertook to make man in His image, for man's good and His glory. This image of God fell on the first encounter with evil. This first man fell as easily as

any man. No man ever fell before he was encountered by temptation. No man could fall into temptation before he was tempted. Well did Paul say of Adam, that he was of the earth earthy. Then, either God did not succeed in making man in His image, or the image of God is not what it is supposed to be. The conception of God as a failure is not in the first chapter of Genesis. In the third chapter the Creator is represented as having made man, issued him commands, which man broke. The Creator cursed man, the ground, the serpent, all concerned. Grant, with some commentators, that the ground was cursed for man's good. This recognizes the necessity of the curse, only shifting its purpose. The fact is, that the Creator here is represented as disappointed, angry, defeated, at least temporarily. Suppose He promised that man would issue in final triumph. This prophecy cannot come to pass if sin is not utterly destroyed. If God did not purpose

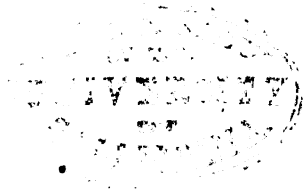
sin, something has happened contrary to His purpose. Suppose, then, that God does promise triumph over the serpent. This promise is of no importance if the serpent can defeat God. If the serpent overthrew God's plans for one instant, he was the superior of God for that instant. There was then no God, for the serpent was upon the Throne ruling man, defeating God. If the serpent was ever the superior, the victor over God, he will always be, for God changes not! This is Serpent Worship. This leaf is no part of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is false to the whole tenor of those Scriptures. No where else is it even intimated that the Eternal God is in a losing conflict with a serpent, or that He is endeavoring to recover ground already lost. This leaf floated in from an outside tradition. No ingenuity of man, whether the story be taken literally, mystically, or allegorically, can show that it does not put man as a battlefield, whereon Evil is tri-

umphant, without valid reason to believe that it will ever be otherwise than triumphant. It is the worship of Evil. It is the religion of China.

3. There is the scientific conception of God. His master is Law. It is unchangeable. It made nature, or it is nature. God is chained and gagged, and helpless. He is not even large enough to be chained. He is tied up with pack thread, and cannot break a thread of it. He cannot make a puff of wind only as Law permits him to do so. If Law says, "take some jelly, work cycles of time and make man," by so saying Law galvanizes a sort of life into this baby God, and He goes mechanically to work, moving as Law leads Him.

The first chapter of the Bible stands God above and out of Nature, making the universe with as much ease as a boy blows soap bubbles. *That* God is worth something. He spoke the world into existence for man, and he will look it into nothing-

ness if it ever gets in man's way. He can make evil to serve Him, out of the darkness bringing light, out of its bitterness bringing the sweetness of sympathy and the healing of mercy; revealing Himself more fully because of evil, and when He is done making it serve man, He can throw it in the face of the sun and burn it like a gnat.



"To love truth, for truth's sake, is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed plot of all other virtues."—LOCKE.

CHAPTER IV.

GOSPEL TRADITIONS.

The popular use of the word Bible, means a translation in the vernacular; but all modern standard translations of the Bible contain things that are not at all in the originals, which are mistaken for a part of the Bible. For instance, the opening words in the English Bible are, "The first book of Moses called." These are an interpolation, without any authority in the original. These, together with "The second book of Moses called." "The third book of Moses called." "The fourth book of Moses called." "The fifth book of Moses called"—all interpolations, are commonly understood to mean that the Bible claims

that Moses was the author of these five books. The Bible makes no such claim. Tradition asserts these books to Moses; but the validity of a tradition is one thing, and the validity of a claim made by the Bible is another thing, quite another! The discussion has been shifted so that uninformed people believe that an attack on the Mosaic authority of the Bible is virtually an attack on the Bible.

In the margin of the English Bible creation is dated B. C. 4004. Geology has attacked this date successfully. Many have thought that this attack sweeps away the Bible. It does not touch the Bible. There are no chronological notes in the margin of the original Bible.

The references a, b, c, d, etc., in the English Bible, are no part of the Bible. Occasionally a reference has some bearing upon a text, but usually they are misleading.

It is true that the originals, themselves, differ in many places. These different

readings do, in some cases, affect the sense, but in no case do they affect the central thought of the Bible, that God is, that man is his creature, and that God is in the destiny of man.

It puzzles many to understand why there are so many disagreements regarding the teachings of the Bible among scholarly and pious men, who are quite certain, each for himself, and not one for the other, that his views are exclusively and authoritatively taught in the "Infallible Book." Little disagreements are becoming more and more ignored, not settled, as the common sense of mankind comes to the rescue, as to feet washing, ornaments, hats on or off during service, the color and texture of priestly robes, the style of hair to be worn, singing hymns or psalms, the use of instruments of music in divine worship, the posture of the body in public prayers. Ink is still shed copiously by some on these topics, but bones are not now broken, nor human blood spilled.

However, there are fundamental differences among recognized Bible expounders regarding the teachings of the Bible on mighty subjects and vast problems. Is God a person, two persons, three persons? How many Gods are there? Is there a Goddess also? The mother of God? Have the plans of God failed? Will they fail eternally? Or are plans being carried out according to decrees which go so hard with the majority of mankind? Or will all be saved finally? Is Satan a person, a principle, a personification of evil? Well, about evil, how did it come? When? In a pre-existent state? Who is to blame for it? Is Satan more than a match for Deity? Will he have the lion's share when the spoils if battle are divided? Is man free, or necessitated? Is man saved by faith alone? by faith and works? by the decrees of God? Is Jesus God himself? or equal with God? or one-third part of the Trinity? or God-man? or man-God? or

mere man? Is the spirit entitled to the pronoun he? or it? Is the Bible the voice of God from His Throne, in every text, sentence, word, syllable, and letter? or does it contain the word of God? Is it inspired in streaks? Does it teach all worth knowing about religion and science? or about religion only? What is the meaning of death, heaven, hell, paradise? How many states after death? One, two, three? What day of the week is the Sabbath? Does "to create" mean to make out of nothing? or to form out of pre-existing elements? Has man a soul? Is it immortal? Is not immortality conditional? What about the resurrection of the body?

None will dispute that the Churches teach conflicting doctrines. That each sect denies that the other teaches the whole counsel of God; but modestly—so modestly—claims to do so itself. Each claims its doctrines are in the Bible. If we summarize this judgment of the sects, they tes-

tify as a whole, that the Bible teaches different and conflicting doctrines. Now, if each sect is doing its best to understand and teach the Bible, the Bible is either the most difficult book possible to be understood, or it *does* teach conflicting doctrines. To say that the sects are not doing their best, is to impeach human nature in its best representatives. The Jewish Sect, the Roman Sect, the Anglican Sect, the Lutheran Sect, contain the best and wisest men in the world. It is not true that any of them are willfully misteaching the Bible. It is impossible for us to escape the conclusion that the Bible contains conflicting doctrines. Some of the wisest and best men on earth conscientiously hold doctrines which conflict with what others of the wisest and best conscientiously hold, and they all cite texts. Some of these men would go to the stake. Men have gone exultingly to death for certain doctrines; others have gone as exultingly for opposite

doctrines. They all glorified in their knowledge of the truth until flames licked up their lives.

How often do we meet professors of Christianity, who, more like gladiators than followers of the meek and lowly Prince of Peace, contend about the dot of a letter, or the use of a preposition, as if the whole world depended upon the result. It cannot be denied that some of the wisest and best men on the earth conscientiously hold doctrines which are irreconcilable with the doctrines of others who are their equals in every particular, and that each party especially affirms that its doctrines are according to the Word of God. What does this mean? It means that the Bible actually contains the main doctrines of both parties.

Any doctrine is the Word of God which lifts man out of subjection to the flesh, out of bondage to sin, out of "fear that hath torment," into wise and loving service of

man, and into fellowship with the Beautiful, the Wise, the Merciful, and the Good.

Since the minds of men perceive from so many points of view, that book is the holiest and wisest which, so to speak, best adapts itself to the angels of vision, reflecting the view which each person most needs in order to poise his soul and make him strong to conquer self. I believe the Bible is that kind of book.

"Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good."—PAUL.

CHAPTER V.

DIFFERENT THEORIES OF INSPIRATION.

Only a cursory inspection of the Bible is required to find that it claims that Two Voices talk to man; one, the Voice of God, the other the Voice of Evil. The Voice of God is represented as speaking truths, to be believed and obeyed; the Voice of Evil as speaking falsehoods, to be disbelieved and disobeyed. Not only are the Two Voices represented as speaking directly to man, but the Voice of God is represented as speaking through good men to man, and the Voice of Evil as speaking through evil men to man. It is apparent that the sayings of good men should not be classified with the sayings of evil men. The lies of evil men—there are many of them in the Bible—are given to be rejected.

From this paragraph and the preceding one, it follows necessarily that there are many things in the Bible which man must disbelieve and disobey, or suffer the consequences; that there are, and must be, in the nature of the case, essential and fundamental contradictions in the Bible, and that there is an Inspiration of Good, and an Inspiration of Evil in the Bible.

We now present Paul as a careful thinker of the Scriptures. He defines the Holy Scriptures to be "Every Scripture inspired by God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for conviction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim., 3:16.) This definition commends itself to reason, and is, withal, practical. That Scripture is holy, is God-breathed, which brings a man into communion with the Father, and into loving service of man. This definition was penned prior to the composition of a large part of the New Testament, but it is the statement of a principle which is true for

all time. That Scripture is unholy, uninspired, which causes a man to ignore God and to wrong man; it is from evil, its root lays hold on dense darkness, and its fruits are bitterness of soul.

This rule is simple, and can be tested. It is presumed by us that the converse of the definition is so plain that Paul did not think it necessary to state it. Every Scripture that is not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, etc., is not Inspired by God.

Then it follows that the Scriptural idea of truth, as Paul understood it, if we understand him aright, is not in the verbal phraseology, but in the power to quicken the life of God in the soul of man.

A thing may be literally false, and yet quite true in this sense. For instance, "The heavens declare the glory of God," is literally an impossibility, yet they do give us an idea of the glory of God, which we feel to be true. The heavens tell the glory of God as a flower tells of beauty. The

world manifests the eternal power and Godhead of the Deity as the sun manifests light.

Grant that God has made a written revelation to man. It must have been written in human language, and according to man's view of things. Then physical facts will have been communicated according to their forms, or appearances.

Some Simple Truths about Language.

It is impossible to speak or write even one intelligent sentence concerning God, without using words which apply primarily to man, or the world. Only those who have never considered this proposition think that this necessary use of words by a speaker or writer proves that he believes that God is man, matter, or force. Nevertheless, a large library would be required to contain all the books which have been published contending otherwise. Not only is it necessary to speak or write of God in

words primarily applicable to man, or the world, but it is necessary to speak or write of all other subjects in the same manner. Whether we will or not, man is the center of thought conception and language, and all things are more or less humanized in our conceptions and utterances. We cannot communicate a thought relative to the world without using words which have and can have no meaning apart from the senses and faculties of man. Not only, therefore, is God humanized in thought, conception, and forms of expression, but all other subjects are likewise so humanized. Take the simplest idea in the world, according to the materialistic dictum of things, to wit: Force. What does man know? What can he say of Force, except as it impresses him through his senses and faculties?

Write the shortest possible sentence of God. God is. Both these words have, primarily, reference to human language, which is based and rooted in man's senses

and faculties. Attempt to put an intelligible meaning in God, and you begin to give it "power," of which you could have no conception without your muscular and nervous systems, and your will. You now add, say, "wisdom." What would you know of wisdom without relating it to the operation of mind? You add, say, "goodness," "love." These all have no base of meaning to man apart from a foundation in man.

Take "is." Does it mean exists? Plainly it is rooted in man, and the world. Does "God is" imply what? Then the answer to "what?" carries along more ideas, which we could not even have without being what we are.

While it is true, as stated in the opening sentence, it is also true that if an author plainly shows that he intends to limit his meaning to the first use of words, he must be held to teach that God is man, or matter, or force. But no author should be held

to such a view except on his own showing, by his limitation of words to their primary signification. It is manifestly unfair for one to maintain that the use of words implying seeing, hearing, etc., should always be used in their first sense. That people know better is evident from the fact that they do not accuse one who speaks of nature as seeing, hearing, etc., of believing that nature has human eyes, ears, etc.

The question arises, could God, even if He took a pen in His hand and wrote every word of the Bible, set Himself down clearly and fully in it? Is it large enough to contain the Infinite? Is human language in one book, or in all books, capable of expressing the Absolute and Limitless One? If human language is finite, imperfect, it cannot reveal the Infinite perfectly. Since man and nature are also both finite, they lie under the same disability. *There is as much obscurity, imperfections, and so-called contradictions, in man and nature as in the written revelations of God.*

For example, no man can reconcile the tooth and claw of a lion with the tooth and hoof of a sheep.

We stand in the presence of mystery, with or without the Bible. Do you say that sin explains such divergent texts of nature? The answer is easy. First, sin itself needs explanation; secondly, sin has not changed the tooth and claw of the lion. Do you say that sin brought suffering and death into the world? It is not true. Even if it were true, why should man's sin inflict suffering and death upon beasts, that are incapable of sin? The answer is still easier. The lion himself suffers pain and death, and his enjoyment should not be considered alone. What about the pain of his victim? Men write glibly of the adaptation—the proof of wisdom in it—of the carniverous beast to seize and kill its prey, but overlook the want of adaptation in the prey to protect itself. Do you say that suffering and death are essential to prevent the "occupancy of

the world by the lower orders of existence?" The statement is flatly denied. Vegetables are removed without pain. It is conceivable that the sheep might have been so made, as when the crisis came to enjoy being eaten as much as his eater enjoys eating him. Do you answer, finally, that the capacity to enjoy pleasure carries with it the capacity to suffer pain? The answer is, You have placed pleasure and pain, *in the nature of things*, where they belong, and have dropped sin as the cause of pain and death.

If we have shown that nature has its mysteries also, we are ready to proceed, merely intimating that mysteries which exist in nature are *not attributed to the Bible by candid and thoughtful people.* The Bible has imported no mystery into the universe, but it is *an attempt to explain mystery.*

Suppose that God could and did write himself down fully in the Bible, has man the capacity to understand the writing?

Yes? Then what is the meaning of the Babel among the Sects?

It is patent that in order for one to assert that there is a conflict between the utterance of any book in regard to facts, and the utterance of nature in regard to the same facts, one must understand what both the books and nature affirm in the premises. While it may be safely held that it is a difficult thing for one person to understand the allegations of the Bible regarding facts, it may be safely held that it is a more difficult thing for one person to understand the allegations of the Bible thereon *and* the allegations of nature.

The theologian may pretend to know much, but the priest of science pretends to know vastly more. The Bible is a large subject. The Bible and Nature a larger subject. It *is* possible one may make a mistake in both, not to say in either. It is certain that the Bible brings no new difficulty into human thought or conception.

The origin of the universe? the nature and destiny of man? God? who? what? where? how many? are fundamental problems, and they exist where there is no letter of the Bible.

There is as much difference between the tooth of a lion and the tooth of a sheep, viewed singly, as between any two texts in the Bible. That speaks of blood, the infliction of suffering, savageness; this of peace, the reception of suffering. No one makes the mistake, however, of denying the existence of either tooth. The earth is full of discordant texts. It puzzles the wise to relate them harmoniously. To intimate that the sin of man has changed the tooth of the lion is absurd. Whether or not man sinned, the lion would tear flesh and eat suffering victims. *Suffering, itself, is a mystery.*

Wise or unwise, the Bible claims to be an effort to explain these matters. In thought, strike the Bible into nothingness.

You are yet there with your past, present, future, and the world is yet there, and God yet is, or Not is! We protest with all our might against any one attributing to the Bible problems that exist in the nature of things.

"A wise man will weigh evidence the more carefully, the more important the subject."—WHATELY.

CHAPTER VI.

LET THE FACT STAND.

Bereshith is the first word in the Bible. It is translated "In the beginning," instead of "In beginning." The difference between the two conceptions is vast. That refers to time, this to action; that seems to justify people in hunting a date, this gives an excuse for such useless and fruitless work. It was that erroneous "the" which led Usher to cipher, and his poor ciphering is responsible for the date affixed to creation in the English Bible B. C. 4004. Some men seem to think that the Bible is responsible for the date, and that Geology has impugned the Bible, when it has impugned only an interpolation. Little did those men who wrote "bereshith" dream that "how

old is the earth?" would become a vital question.

It is philosophically possible that matter is only a various form of force; but the Bible does not say so, nor attempt to give the *how* of its genesis any more than the *when*. A wise book, this Bible! If it had said absolutely that matter was created out of nothing, these objectors would have had reasons satisfactory to themselves to reject it; if it had said absolutely that matter was not created out of nothing, men who thought *that* ought to be the mode of creation, would have had difficulties to encounter. Hence, as a fact, the Bible says nothing decisively on the subject. It steadily avoids raising unnecessary questions. If unnecessary questions be raised by the human intellect, it leaves them unanswered.

The learned tell us that b'reshith is a substantive feminine with feminine termination *ith*—prefix b—root, *rosh*. The word

heads, in (Gen., 2: 10) is the plural of rosh; and the primary idea of rosh is motion. It is evident that Usher was misled by the "the" in the English Translation.

"In beginning" refers to *action*, not to time. There was neither tick of clock, beat of pulse, nor ebb of tide, by which to compute time.

"In beginning" simply means commencing. Whether the earth was made 6,000 or 6,000,000 years ago, is of no vital importance. It is the same earth; it seeds the same and grows wheat the same, no matter *when* it came from the creative act of God. If the disciples of Usher desire to squabble with the disciples of Lyell as to its age, there is no law except common sense and duty to man against it.

If the earth's precise age to a day could be ascertained, there would be nothing added to the stock of knowledge but a date. Oh! the little things which disturb man.

"The best preacher is the heart; the best teacher is time; the best book is the world; the best friend is God."—MISHNA.

CHAPTER VII.

There are three views as regards how the Bible should be received. One that the Priests, or Church recognized, are the expounders thereof. This view sets the Priests, or Church, above the Bible.

The second view is that laymen have the right, and it is their duty, to compare what the Church teaches with the Bible, and what the Bible says is authoritative. This view sets the Bible up above man.

The third view is that man has the right, and it is his duty, to judge the contents of the Bible, whether they be true or false. This view sets man above the Bible.

All nations have their Bibles, either oral or written. Time brings the idea of sacredness, the idea of sacredness blinds many to faults. There are differences of

opinion—honest and intelligent differences of opinion—held by thousands as to the real doctrines of the Bible. It is folly to attempt to extinguish reason and stifle conscience by an appeal to a text of any book. If a book teaches what is unreasonable the teaching is false, though it be accompanied by thunder and threatenings and what not!

During the history of the Church there have been two parties, one endeavoring to prevent the people reading the Scriptures, which they proclaim to be the Word of God, and the other demanding that the people read them. The former admits that the Scriptures are difficult to understand, the latter assert that the Scriptures are very plain—that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." We admit, with the former, that the Scriptures are difficult to understand, but we deny that "one faith" means "one doctrine" or "one creed." The root of the word translated

faith is obedience, and the idea is of obedience to God's moral laws. There is nothing in the Old Testament that warrants the notion that a man is to be saved or damned by his opinions, nor in the New Testament. It is, "I was hungry, and ye fed me," etc. It is not, "You had the true set of dogmas."

The Bible is not a systematic Theology. Christianity is a *life*, not a *creed!*

The Bible was not given so much to affect the head as to inspire the heart; he knows all of it worth knowing who loves God and his neighbor—he knows less than nothing of it who hates man. One who was a great teacher viewed from any standpoint represents God as judging men, not by their creeds or rituals or notions, but by their deeds of kindness and acts of mercy.

A tendency in man to conceive of God is in harmony with man's character. Said a Greek satirist, Xenophanes, "Mortals think

the gods are born and have shape and voice and raiment like themselves."

According to our view of the Bible, that conception which is best suited to bring you to God will mold you. Possibly you may have first one conception, then another, then another. If you change thus, the Bible will change to you.

That it is wrong to murder, is true. It is not wrong to murder because the Bible forbids it, but the Bible forbids it because it is wrong. Right and wrong existed before the first word of the Bible was written. The utmost that the Bible can do is to reveal truths. The Bible contains many imperishable and incontestable truths. The question of the authorship, or source of a book, is not the question of the truth if its contents.

That God should reveal himself to man, is not difficult to believe. The real difficulty is not in believing that God has communicated to man, but that he has ceased

to communicate. That God did not reveal himself to man before the time of Moses, or since the time of Malachi, or of John the Evangelist, if accepted, must be accepted by faith alone. That the Bible claims all the revelation of God which He has made to man, is a dogma which faith alone can receive. No valid human reason can be rendered thereon.

The Bible wisely leaves vagaries untouched, and handles essential problems. It is intensely practical. It leaves a man free to accept man as he is, and do something for him.

The main purpose of the Bible is to affect our lives; to "write the laws of God in our hearts." The book being mainly concerned about how to live aright, should touch man at all points of his nature. The man who cannot be moved by a higher motive, let him be moved by a lower one, only that he move forward. There are passages and incidents in the Book of Lives that are essen-

tial to a full representation of human nature at its lowest phases. These passages and incidents were not given to be read in public, or to justify the ugliness which they depict. Those who assert that every word in the Bible is meant for public reading, and the scoffers who assert that low phases of life should not be given, are equally in error. The method of the Jewish Church concerning these matters is based upon well established facts, as well as upon common sense. Paul, addressing the "brethren" in a public capacity, takes the same ground. (Phil., 4: 8: 9.) "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

"Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen

in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you."

Besides other codes, a nation must have its penal code; it must recognize the existence of every crime possible to man; it must define, denounce, and punish—or perish! The penal codes in the Bible arise out of the human effort to deal with man as a criminal. The question of the human punishment for a crime against man, is a matter that man has been left to experiment with. Of course God sanctions all honest efforts to prevent and punish crime; that Moses meant no more than a general sanction, is apparent when he accepted the views of Jethro in the administration of Justice as against some of which he had appended the name of the Lord.

There is nothing grappling with the life of man that is unworthy of notice and sympathy by all the Heavens. Man, though disfigured some, is yet of God and in his image.

Many beneficial results come to us from the accounts of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. The divine thought that God is in the human race, is only an expounded form of the thought that God is in one man, or in one race. "Is not one man as dear to the heart of the Father as another?"

One good result of accepting the story of creation in Genesis, is that it leaves man free to do something for the good of his fellow beings, while if it should become thought to be a vital question as to just how, or precisely when, the earth was made, there are everlasting problems for men which direct their minds into useless channels of effort.

How the battle has raged in regard to the authorship of the Pentateuch, and over the account of Moses' death! The one who wrote of the death of Moses was probably some simple minded man, unable to write a book, but able to pour out his soul over

the dead, and touch a tomb with hope and beauty! That the Lord buried Moses cannot be proved, nor disproved; but the Lord was with him in his last struggle—that is true. That he cared even for the dust of a man gives us a glimpse into the Lord's heart worth more than what all the higher critics, and their friends, the bug-hunters, have said or can say. Call this epitaph a note from an unknown author. It states as a matter of fact what man must needs believe, if he would front the world without fear or flinching, that the Lord will be with his servant in his last gasp, and will tenderly regard the dust from which the spirit has moved on.

The time comes to all when they wish to know themselves as they are, and there is only one Book we know of that lays the human heart bare without fear or flattery —*that Book is the Bible.* It will sift a man, search him out, and by flash of fire, or thunder peal, threat, gloomy silence, or gentle

whisperings, in some way stir his inward world until he shall want to "lay down arms." It does still more. It declares that God takes him as he is, and will stand by him as long as he gropes upward.

It is good that the Bible was written for the clinging soul that needs a God Invincible; for the sturdy, self-willed man who feels strong enough to supplement God in His weakness of will; for the tender hearted brother who cannot have peace in his soul with the thought that one is lost.

If it were written for either of these alone, it would not be a book, but a fragment; it would not have represented all the phases of thought, but one phase; it would have been accepted only by those whose thought it expressed in clear-cut terms.

It is the wisest of Books, for the very reason that it is the most many sided. If it encourages your heart to think you may

progress forever, that is there; if the weary look forward to a peaceful rest after this fever called "life" is over, that is there; there is no thought good for man or helpful to him, in any mood, or place, or condition, that is not there for him. It is good that the Bible was not made for one creed.

God is in the human race, and will stay and help in every effort to rise out of that which hurts, or destroys, or even makes afraid—His children.